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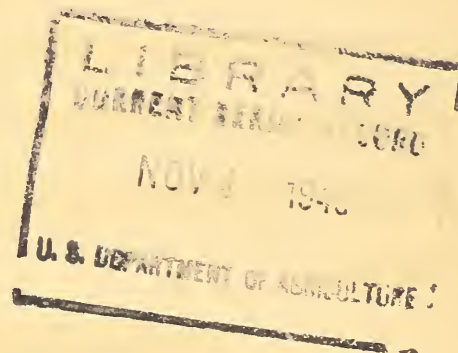
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United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Administration
Bureau of Animal Industry

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REPORT ON DEVELOPMENTS
IN THE
CAMPAIGN AGAINST FOOT-AND-MOUTH
DISEASE IN MEXICO

No. 15



NOTE: This report has been prepared on the basis of the best information obtainable at the time of compilation but is subject to later revision. The first report in this series was prepared January 28, 1947, and was followed by 11 supplemental reports, making 12 in all up to January 29, 1948. Since then separate reports on developments in the campaign have been issued, one on March 18 and another on May 10. This present report is the 15th of the entire series, exclusive of press releases and other timely announcements.

Harry H. Johnson Heads U. S. Foot-and-Mouth
Staff in Mexico

Harry H. Johnson, a business executive of Houston, Tex., was designated, in May, as co-director of the joint Mexican-United States commission, engaged in the campaign against foot-and-mouth disease in Mexico. He assumed the full responsibility of that office in June, succeeding Dr. M. S. Shahan whom the Bureau of Animal Industry has selected to plan and direct the United States foot-and-mouth disease research program, recently authorized by Congress.

Mr. Johnson's appointment carried the additional designation of special assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture. He will also work closely with officials of the Bureau of Animal Industry. The appointment of a business executive to head the United States' foot-and-mouth disease staff in Mexico had been urged by congressional leaders, the Industry Advisory Committee on Foot-and-Mouth Disease, and several livestock groups as a means of relieving the technical force of many administrative responsibilities, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the campaign.

Northern Foot-and-Mouth Disease Quarantine Line
Unbreached

No case of foot-and-mouth disease has yet been detected north of the northern quarantine line, established more than a year ago across central Mexico. This situation strongly indicates that the commission's current strategy in dealing with the disease is sound and that the campaign to keep the infection from invading northern Mexico and the United States has been successful.

Several times there have been rumors of infected spots north of the quarantine line. However, on thorough investigation by the commission's inspectors rushed to the localities in question, all such rumors have proved to be false.

There have been occasional small pockets of infection south of the northern quarantine line and fairly close to it. One such pocket in the vicinity of Tamazunchale, in the State of San Luis Potosi, was cleaned up, during the last 2 weeks in June, by the slaughter and burial of 855 cattle and 410 small animals.

Southeastern Quarantine Line Also Protected

The southeastern quarantine line across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is much shorter than the line across central Mexico, but the problem of guarding it has been made difficult by continuing opposition on the part of local cattle owners. This has been most marked in the Coatzacoalcos district. Although the Mexican and United States appraisers place fair valuations upon the animals to be destroyed—usually somewhat above the market-price—owners have been very slow in permitting slaughter of the animals. There have also been threats of violence to commission personnel.

In spite of the difficulties, eradication operations in an infected pocket in the southeastern area during June involved the killing and burial of 3,988 cattle and 889 small animals. This work continued during July until the Coatzacoalcos River was reached. Unless new infection is discovered in this area, there will be no further slaughter. The quarantine will be maintained, inspections will be continued, and arrangements are being made to vaccinate the susceptible animals remaining in the buffer zone as soon as a supply of vaccine is available for the purpose.

Vaccination Program

Vaccination as a means of protecting susceptible animals from foot-and-mouth disease in Mexico is going forward on a scale governed largely by supplies of available vaccine. Most of the animals vaccinated thus far have been in or near the northern buffer zone. The vaccine used has come from Argentina and Europe, but the joint commission is now preparing to produce foot-and-mouth disease vaccine in Mexico in substantial quantities.

The laboratories of the commission, near Mexico City, have been producing some vaccine since the middle of May. This work has had to start "from scratch." Much credit for successes achieved may be given to Dr. Fernando Camargo of Mexico and Dr. Chester A. Manthei of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

With additional space and facilities, officials of the commission expect to reach a production of 400,000 doses a month by October. In addition to this output, the importation of 200,000 doses of foreign vaccine a month is contemplated, making a total of 600,000 doses monthly. Meanwhile the personnel of the commission's inspection and vaccine division is being increased in preparation for administering the supplies of vaccine expected. The staff and facilities are already ample for applying more vaccine than is being received.

Disinfection Operations

The constant inspection, cleaning, and disinfection of vehicles and other conveyances play an important part in keeping down the spread of the disease. During an average month these operations currently involve about 200 cargo planes, 1,700 passenger planes, 4,500 railroad cars, 2,500 stock trucks, and 1,600 boats and barges. The commission's sanitary supervision extended, in recent months, to more than 7,000 migrant workers, known as braceros, who go to the United States in the spring and summer to work on farms and ranches. Owing to the possibility of their carrying the virus of foot-and-mouth disease, cooperative arrangements were made by the commission with the U. S. Embassy, the U. S. Department of Labor, and the Mexican Government to inspect such workers, together with their baggage, and to conduct disinfection of clothing and other articles when necessary.

Fence Construction Halted by Rains

The construction of a substantial barbed wire fence at the eastern end of the northern buffer^{zone}, as an added protection to the northern quarantine line, continued to make progress until late in July, when heavy rains caused the temporary stoppage of this work. At that time more than 132 miles of truck trail for construction and patrol purposes had been finished and about 58 miles of fence completed. In addition, several miles of posts had been set ahead of the fence.

Much of the fence is in jungle country requiring the use of bulldozers to clear the way. The fence project has proved to be very popular with the people in surrounding areas; they have given the construction crews excellent cooperation. Though only a rough truck trail, the right-of-way seems to the people of the communities through which it runs like a highway leading out to the world.

Every 3 or 4 miles, openings are left in the fence at which disinfection stations will be placed. Completed parts of the fence are patrolled by soldiers.

Commission Personnel Exceeds 2,000

In recent months the combined civilian personnel engaged in the campaign against foot-and-mouth disease in Mexico has exceeded 2,000 employees. Early in July 1948, those of the United States section of the commission numbered 438 and of the Mexican section 235. The remainder, numbering 1,476, were mostly laborers and other unskilled workers employed by the joint commission in Mexico City and the field.

The United States staff included 76 veterinarians, and Mexican officials reported 84 veterinarians. Other groups included livestock inspectors, sanitary and other technicians, appraisers, paymasters, administrative and clerical

employees, mechanics, and shopmen. Some of the groups comprised specialists highly trained in engineering, radio, and other specialized fields.

Purchase of Canned Meat in Northern Mexico

The program for purchasing canned meat in northern Mexico continues to provide an outlet there for cattle that can no longer enter the United States because of foot-and-mouth disease quarantine. The Department's Commodity Credit Corporation contracted, during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1948, for the purchase of 100,000,000 pounds of canned meat and gravy, including some edible meat byproducts. About 40,000,000 pounds of such commodities were delivered during the year, providing a market outlet for approximately 180,000 cattle. The principal distribution of the canned products was by resale for European relief.

European Experience Aiding Mexican-United States Foot-and-Mouth Disease Effort

Late in June, two of the three U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry scientists who had previously been assigned to foot-and-mouth disease laboratories in Europe returned to the United States for conferences. These two scientists, Drs. L. O. Mott and H. W. Johnson, had visited laboratories in England, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Switzerland. There they became familiar with the research methods and facilities used, and they also participated in the production of foot-and-mouth disease vaccine. The information they obtained abroad is being used by U. S. Department of Agriculture officials in planning its own foot-and-mouth disease research on both a short-time and long-time basis.

Data on the production of vaccines in the foreign countries visited by the United States scientists promise to be useful, also, in the vaccine program of the foot-and-mouth disease campaign in Mexico. Dr. I. A. Galloway,

director of the Research Institute in England, has cooperated with U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists in typing numerous samples of foot-and-mouth disease virus collected in Mexico. As a result of his studies, selected samples have been made available to laboratories in Europe for their use in preparing vaccine for the campaign in Mexico.

In view of the importance of having the proper quantities of foreign vaccine available at the times needed, several directors of the foreign laboratories recently visited the Bureau of Animal Industry, in Washington, D. C., and the joint foot-and-mouth disease commission in Mexico City. The visits made in July involved consultations with United States and Mexican officials and research workers and study of their present and contemplated technical facilities. In particular, observations of the conditions under which vaccines are being tested and used in Mexico and the progress of vaccine production there aided the visitors in planning their own vaccine production in a manner most helpful to the campaign.

The visiting foreign scientists were Dr. H. S. Frenkel, director of the State Veterinary Research Institute, Amsterdam, Holland; Dr. Erik Fogedby, director of the Danish Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research Institute, Lindholm, Denmark; and Dr. George A. Moosbrugger, director of the Swiss Federal Vaccine Institute, Basel, Switzerland. In commenting on scientific research as a weapon against foot-and-mouth disease, Dr. Moosbrugger declared that problems constantly turn up that make necessary the presence of a laboratory. "For example," he explained, "it often is necessary to look after the importation of virus on different objects and to determine which are dangerous and which are not. Only the countries that have a research institute in constant activity can consider themselves ready for the fight."

Dr. Mohler Endorses Research Program

Dr. John R. Mohler, formerly Chief of the U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry, has endorsed current plans for research on foot-and-mouth disease in the United States. In a letter to Dr. B. T. Simms, the present Chief of the Bureau, Dr. Mohler recently stated: "I fully and heartily concur in the new policies you have adopted. World conditions in general and the presence of this disease in many foreign countries, now separated from us only by a few hours' airplane flight, instead of days or weeks by boat, make it desirable that we at least hunt for other repressive measures to supplement the slaughter method, if sufficient need should arise. The search might well include delving into the merits of vaccination."

Though now sponsoring a research program that includes the study of vaccines, Bureau officials emphasize that its studies are purely of fact-finding character and that, on the basis of present conditions, they contemplate no changes in the long-established slaughter policy of eradicating any outbreak that may occur in the United States.

Border Patrol Active

In activities along the Mexican-United States border, 230 animals were destroyed in May and 98 in June because of entry from Mexico. The reduction in number of prohibited animals destroyed was largely due to rain in sections of Mexico, which provided a better supply of water back from the Rio Grande River. Deeper water in the river also tended to prevent animals from crossing.

In the course of patrol activities, numerous conveyances, including trucks, railroad cars, and airplanes, were inspected. When found, such prohibited products as meat, pelts, green bones, and straw packing material were destroyed. Supervision extended to necessary cleaning and disinfection of the conveyances.

Commission Aircraft Disaster

On July 2, the commission's DC-3 airplane crashed on a mountainside in Mexico, resulting in the tragic death of all 16 persons aboard. The search for the plane began when it failed to arrive at the Mexico City airport from Minatitlan. Cooperating with the commission's staff in seeking news of the plane were numerous radio and telegraph operators, 15 Mexican Army planes, an Embassy plane, a U. S. Army Rescue Squadron from El Paso, and the personnel of 3 commercial airlines.

Though hampered by cloudy weather, the search resulted, on July 4, in locating the burned wreckage of the plane near La Perla on Orizaba Mountain. It had previously been found by a farmer who had heard the plane explode and had notified local authorities who had sent soldiers to guard it. The approach of the rescue brigades to the scene of the wreck was made difficult by almost continuous rain and the need to make the last part of the ascent over difficult mountain terrain on foot or muleback. The entire staff of the commission cooperated to the utmost, working day and night in the hope of finding someone from the plane still alive, but there were no survivors.

Of the 16 victims of the disaster, 5 were members of the United States section of the commission. They were O. C. Morris, treasurer of the commission; Robert Horton, personnel investigator; and Augustus F. Russell, Aubrey M. Boone, and Howard W. Neely, sanitary technicians. Other Americans aboard were the pilot, co-pilot, and a Mexico City businessman. Most of the remainder were Mexican citizens who served the commission in various capacities. Fifteen of the bodies were brought to Mexico City where, ^{after} they remained for a day under Mexican and United States flags and a guard of honor, appropriate services were held. The sixteenth body, that of a Mexican interpreter, was not recovered until several days later.

